



Region 1  
490 N. Meridian Road  
Kalispell, MT 59901

**Decision Notice  
and  
Finding of No Significant Impact  
for  
TEAKETTLE FISHING ACCESS SITE  
PROPOSED IMPROVEMENT  
Environmental Assessment**

**June 19, 2015**

**Description of the Proposed Action:**

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) is proposing site improvements at Teakettle Fishing Access Site (FAS) on the Flathead River near Columbia Falls. FWP proposes to improve Teakettle FAS by expanding and improving the existing gravel parking areas with designated parking and a new drive lane, and installing barrier rock, directional and informational signs, and repairing existing boundary fencing. The Proposed Action would help accommodate the increasing demands on the site from diverse recreational uses.

**Public Comment:**

FWP accepted public comment on the draft environmental assessment (EA) for a 30-day period, from May 14 through June 12, 2015. The EA was advertised through media releases and legal notices in the Daily Inter Lake, Helena Independent Record, Hungry Horse News, and on the FWP web page. Copies of the EA were available from the Kalispell FWP office, on the FWP web site, and at the Montana State Library and the Flathead County Libraries.

Twelve written comments were received during the comment period. Eight comments were in favor of the proposal, and three were in opposition to the proposal. One comment was neither in favor or opposed. We have identified the unique comments, paraphrased them below, and provided a brief response to each comment.

**Response to Comments:**

1. **Comment** – Eight comments supported the proposal. One of these comments said that improvements are long overdue. Another suggested that it still may not provide enough parking at the site.

**Response** – FWP appreciates the support for the FAS improvements and is looking to maximize the available parking while still providing a buffer of open space and vegetation between the parking area and the neighboring private residences.

2. **Comment** – One comment recognized the need for improved and expanded parking and better use of the space available at the site, but raised two specific concerns with the proposal. The first concern is that the plan actually reduces the amount of truck and trailer parking spaces available. The second concern questions whether the plan actually increases the amount of parking available. People currently park along the access road when all parking sites are full, and the plan will actually eliminate some of those spaces.

**Response** – FWP recognizes the need for more designated truck and trailer parking spaces than the plan currently calls for and is working on a plan to provide that. Currently, four of the truck and trailer spaces that people use encroach into the US Highway right of way, land owned by the Montana Department of Transportation (MDOT). The proposal calls for abandoning that area and converting those spaces to single vehicle spaces. FWP is currently in discussions with MDOT to secure permission to continue to use the area for truck-trailer parking. If permission is not granted, FWP will look to make up for the loss of those spaces somewhere else in the site by lengthening some of the single vehicle spaces identified in the plan. No additional impacts are anticipated if some single vehicle parking spaces are lengthened (e.g., about 8 feet) from what has been identified in the draft environmental assessment.

As to the comment regarding passenger vehicle parking, FWP believes establishing a formal parking area with designated parking spaces does increase the capacity of parking over the current configuration. Furthermore, FWP will continue to permit parking along the access road where doing so will not inhibit traffic flow or access by emergency vehicles.

3. **Comment** – Three comments strongly opposed the plan primarily because of the lack of truck and trailer parking provided. One of them suggested that the current parking layout has been working for 30 years and doesn't need to be changed. Two of them said that the license-holding fishermen and women are the ones who actually pay for maintenance of the site and will be negatively affected by the lack of truck and trailer parking, while the people who don't pay for fishing licenses will benefit the most. One suggested that the plan is a poor use of limited funding because the site is only full for eight weekends per year when the weather is hot.

**Response** – FWP is currently looking at ways to provide more truck and trailer parking than the plan calls for. Please see the **response to Comment 2** for more details regarding FWP's effort to address that issue. FWP intends to improve access to the Flathead River for a wide range of recreational users with this project.

**Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI):**

Based on the analysis in the environmental assessment (EA), I find Alternative B to be the preferred alternative. I have evaluated the EA and applicable laws, regulations, and policies and have determined that this action will not have a significant effect on the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared.

**Alternative B – Proposed Action:**

In order to provide improved recreational access, reduce congestion, and improve public safety, FWP proposes to improve Teakettle FAS by expanding and improving the existing gravel parking areas with designated parking and a new drive lane, and installing barrier rock, directional and informational signs, and repairing existing boundary fencing.

The final EA may be viewed at or obtained from Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, Region One, 490 N. Meridian Road, Kalispell, MT 59901. Contact person:

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A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jim Williams".

Jim Williams  
Regional Supervisor

June 19, 2015  
Date